

critical digest

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The Weekly Newsletter Digest of the Current New York Theatre Scene

New York Openings This Week

Mr. Pickwick-Plymouth, 9/17/52. The Playwrights' Company presents Stanley Young's new comedy, freely drawn from incidents in Dickens' "The Pickwick Papers." Estelle Winwood, Nigel Green and George Howe featured, directed by John Burrell.

Digests of Current Reviews

Seagulls Over Sorrente-Golden, 9/11/52. Season opener drew just 2 mild pro reviews, remainder mild cons. Hugh Hastings new naval comedy, which is now in its 3rd year in London, was recommended by Coleman, Mirror, and Hawkins, World Telegram & Sun, as mildly diverting theatre fare, well cast and directed. Charles Bowden and Phillip Langer production featuring J. Pat O'Malley, Leslie Nielsen, Guy Spaul and Walter Brooke was tabbed filled with heart and hilarity by Coleman, while Hawkins okayed it if theatre goers is prepared for a good time. Future performances he assured would be faster and bawdier. Majority lightly panned it as dull, plotless versions of Mr. Roberts and Stalag 17. Atkinson, Times, believes that minor plays of every nationality lose their character when they travel abroad. Kerr, Herald Tribune, agreed with Times man that show was much better than last season's first try Bagels and Yox. Chapman, News, termed it a mere over expanded sketch. Watts, Post, joined reviewers who thought script lacked force and interest of American war comedies. McClain, Journal American, blamed lack of background of Royal Naval by audience and lack of true British characterization by cast. Sheaffer, Eagle, thought it a mild, undistinctive show which failed to arouse any enthusiasm pro or con. J. Pat O'Malley walked off with acting honors, being recommended for season award. Staging by Hastings and Bowden drew few criticisms from either side. Sets by Melvin Bourne recommended by most. Coleman noted that audience, like critics, will be of two minds on show, some liking it very much and others not caring either way.

7:00 PM Monday Curtain Successful

Business generally improved for the nine shows which took part in the debut of the 7:00 PM Monday curtain time. New Faces of 1952, The Male Animal and Top Banana adhered to their regular curtain times. Nine who tried it will probably continue the policy indefinitely comments Morehouse, WT&S, who was chief instigator of the test. Seven shows reported increase in business compared to usual Monday night. Most shows were out way before 10:00 PM. Few theatre geers arrived late for the early curtain, most of them being from out of town. Sardi's started serving dinner at 4:30 PM. Railroads have agreed to publicize 7:00 PM curtains free of charge.

Gilbert W. Gabriel - 1890-1952.

Cue drama critic and president of NY Drama Critics' Circle, who died September 3rd, brought learned mind to his task, Cue editorial remarks. No one had deeper affection for the theatre, and no one has ever written better his estimate of a play. He was a man who gave art the best of his talent, and the best of his soul. Atkinson, Times, will miss an old comrade who responded with enthusiasm to beauty in any kind of art and knew how to find the words to describe it. Watts, Post, knows theatre has lost a loyal, devoted, endlessly understanding and very dear friend.

News & Notes

Italian government granted theatre people reduced transportation rates...Eighteen story office building will replace Empire Theatre...Seagulls over Sorrente opened in Salzburg same night it debuted on Broadway...Gloria Swanson fashions shown at Franklin Simon.
Copyright 1952 T.M.Kraus, 505 5th Ave NYC MU 2-0326 TV-Film-PR-Stage Surveys

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' Cumulative NYC Ratings '
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D - Daily

DT-NY Times	DJC-Journal of Commerce	WCM-Chr Science Monitor
DH-NY Herald Tribune	DWJ-Wall Street Journal	WC -Commonweal
DN-NY News	DWW-Women's Wear	WCU-Cue
DM-NY Mirror	WB -Billboard	WN -Nation
DC-NY Compass	WV -Variety	WNR-New Republic
DP-NY Post	WCD-Critical Digest	WNS-Newsweek
DJ-NY Journal American	WGN-George Jean Nathan	WNY-New Yorker
DW-NY World Tele-Sun	WWM-Ward Morehouse	WSR-Saturday Review
DB-Brooklyn Eagle	BC -WCBS Bill Leonard	WT -Time
DL-L.I.Press	BL -New Leader - WEVD	MP -Park East

Shows are rated as to how the critics liked them not if they think they will be hits. "So-so" means the critic did not state directly if he recommends the show for an entertaining or stimulating evening.

THE FOURPOSTER-10/24/51	PROS: 29	CON: DH DP WGM WWM BL WC WNY
		NONE: DWJ WN WNR WSR
GUYS AND DOLLS-11/24/50	PROS: 29	CON: WN
THE KING AND I-3/29/51	PROS: 29	CON: WN
THE MALE ANIMAL-4/30/52	PROS: 27	NONE: WGN MP WNR
THE MOON IS BLUE-3/8/51	PROS: 26	CON: WCD WGN NONE: WN MP
MRS. McTHING-2/20/52	PROS: 20	CON: DM DJ BC DL WNR WT WGN
		NONE: WNR MP
PAL JOEY-1/3/52	PROS: 25	CON: BL NONE: WNR
NEW FACES OF 1952-5/16/52	PROS: 25	CON: DP WT WGN NONE: WN WNR
A NIGHT IN VENICE-6/26/52	PROS: 20	CON: DC WSR NONE: WGN WNR BC WT MP
POINT OF NO RETURN-12/13/51	PROS: 25	CON: DW BL WN WNR WT
SOUTH PACIFIC-4/7/49	PROS: 29	CON: WT
TOP BANANA-11/1/51	PROS: 23	CON: DP DJ BL NONE: WCM WN WWR WSR
WISH YOU WERE HERE-6/25/52	PROS: DN DC DB DL DJC WV BL	
	NONE: DWW WCD WGN BC WCM WN WNR MP	
	CON: DT DH DM DP DJ DW DWJ WB WWM WC WCU WNS	
		WT WNY WSR

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' Off Broadway '
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Summer and Smoke returned from two week vacation to resume long run success at Circle in Square...American Lyric Theatre group, now playing at Provincetown, presented one week program at Westport, Conn, Country Playhouse...John Carradine gave week end midnight readings at Circle in Square. September "Park East" features survey of Off Broadway groups by Elias, Compass...Show of Month Club booked two preview performances of Frankie & Johnny at Theatre de Lys...Cherry Lane Theatre for lease...Amato Opera Theatre reopened with operas scheduled Friday, Saturday and Sunday evenings. Marionette Theatre of NYC Park Department praised by Watson, Journal American.

Fortress of Glass, new play by Daniel Polis presented by Irwin Rose during Loft Players two vacation at Circle in Square, drew split notices. Pollock, Compass, rated it as a good young play that keeps you interested, while Hawkins, WT&S, and Shanley, Times, thought it was poorly written, acted and directed. Author, who also directed and acted in three character story of student love, put terrific will and enthusiasm into production, in attempt to make up for dramatic talent, panned Hawkins...American Lyric Theatre programs at Provincetown recommended by Pollock, Compass, who wonders why a group hasn't presented evening of short plays and operas before.

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' Green Room Department '
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RESEARCH DEPT...Cue editors asked by NY City Council head Halley to form group of disinterested persons to petition him for official action on a new theatre building code...Yale 1936 graduates see 4.24 plays per year, survey by John Hershey, Harper's, discovered...TV Guide viewers in NY area see 2.2 plays per year, and one movie a week, a random sample taken for promotion data points out.

NO REPRESSION...Senator McCarthy can't be blamed for lack of "masterpieces" or for Broadway's current economic conditions, Shipley, New Leader, reminds Arthur Miller. Playwrights are more likely to be indignant than afraid. Fact that author can speak out is evidence that one need not fear. Miller also reminded that Elmer Rice "stopped" writing before each of his five last plays.

WHERE'S FERRER...Chapman, News, and Sheaffer, Eagle, disagree with Jose Ferrer's premise stated in a UP London interview that he is wearing out his Broadway welcome. While it is true the audience gets tired of actor playing himself in each part, the critics complimented the star's histrionic talents. Both thought statement silly. Recent theatre notes show that Ferrer probably won't stay away from Broadway for 18 months.

CRITICAL THOUGHTS...Summer theatre apprentice system must end false promises to youngsters and pay them something for their physical labors, recommends NBC Leon Pearson...Press agents and company managers resent producers' attempts to make them invest in shows, Variety notes. Chapman, News, serves notice on first nighters that when the star or management warrants he will wear a dinner jacket to show.

MAIL BOX...Theatre goers urged to write to NY City Council insisting that two year old Quinn Bill be reported out of committee, urges Burr, Playbill...Smoky auditoriums would be unpleasant and unhealthy for performers, Herald Tribune reader adds...Times reader urges spotlight on easier ticket buying methods, not new theatres...Sheaffer, Eagle, received angry note from fan club for Johnny Stewart, Bernardine, who claims critic has consistently panned their young idol. Tain't so, he answers.

AL BECKMAN OBIT...Bagels and Yox co-producer was known and beloved by every entertainer in the business, recalls Mortimer, Mirror. Beckman was the creator of the Borscht Circuit and the discoverer of half of today's stars. The town will never be the same without him. He Route ly the Shubert Alley of the Catskills, agrees Gardner, Herald Tribune. None who knew him will ever travel that route without retelling some of the stories that made him legendary. Beckman and Pransky production of Bagels and Minx scheduled for Broadway in a few weeks.

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' Theatre News Round Up '
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Point of No Return gives Actors Fund benefit September 21...Virginia de Luce, June Carroll, Ronny Graham on New Haven RR Show Train for New Faces of 1952...A Night in Venice will be staged against next summer at Jones Beach Marine Stadium...New Moss Hart show titled The Climate of Eden First annual convention of New England Theatre Conference held in Boston, October 4...New Dramatists Workshop seeking actor and producer volunteers. Show Shop's first annual "Artists in Theatre" exhibit opened...Ticket Code Enforcement Authority to seek party and club agents share in budget.

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 ' Gertrude Lawrence - Editorials & Reflections '
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TIMES: Sudden death will come as personal shock and grief to thousands upon thousands of Americans. It was her peculiar gift to make herself seem personally known to everyone who watched her and listened to her. It was the making of the theatre a living experience of enormous gusto, of joy of life, of constant variety and unchanging warmth.

HERALD TRIBUNE: She was born to the theatre, but she was far more than just another successful actress. To many people on both sides of the footlights, she personified the theatre itself, its unique glamor and magic. Even when stricken by her last illness she chose to remain on the stage, still illuminating it with an incandescence that does not fade even with her death.

WORLD TELEGRAM & SUN: It is a great loss to anyone who ever has enjoyed that electric moment of pleasurable anticipation when the house lights grow dim and the curtains part on a "live" production. Her greatness was more than mastery of technical skills. She had in addition a greatness of spirit and a selfless determination to help others. Her memory will long live in the hearts of theatre goers and performers who aspire to the measure of her artistry.

JOURNAL AMERICAN: Good bye, Gertie. You made life happier while you were part of it. We shall never see the like of you again.

WATTS, POST: Something of the beauty, gaiety, romantic excitement of the world went out of everyone's life. For the people of the theatre it was the only consolation of a great tragedy that so many men and women throughout America, who had never seemed aware of the stage, were so shaken by the news. She represented the sort of intangible glamor that is only too rarely to be found in the drama today. Theatre tradition is richer because she lived, but poorer because she is gone.

CHAPMAN, NEWS: She would have been a distinguished woman no matter what direction her life had taken. Loss of her passing far overbalanced by gain which was in our profit in long years when this gracious and graceful lady was on stage, willing and superbly able to lighten our hearts.

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 ' Legit Stuff '
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Lyceum Theatre to be used for TV shows...No immediate replacement due for Gertrude Lawrence in The King and I. Constance Carpenter will continue until further notice...NY theatres dimmed lights at 8:30 PM, day of star's funeral as tribute, while show's Tuesday evening performance was cancelled. John Keating named Cue drama critic...Cloris Leachman to replace Martha Wright, South Pacific, for three weeks.

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